

**HOLY APOSTLES PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**7/18/24 @ 7:30 PM**

1. Call to Order: Norm Pomrening at 7:33 pm
2. Opening Prayer: Father Dokos
3. Recite Mission Statement: Norm Pomrening
4. Approval of Minutes: Val Dranias moved to approve the minutes of the 7/13 PC meeting; Bill Leider seconded. Approved unanimously.
5. Correspondence: Val Dranias – a thank you note was received from our chanter, Helen Geanon, for the Holy Week bonus. A thank you from Metropolitan Nathanael for our hospitality on his recent visit, Approval of our Landscape Project from the Metropolis and approval to move forward with our Foundation by the Archdiocese. A request for a donation to the Metropolis in the amount of \$10,183.96. Peter Bell moved to table discussion of Metropolis donation to a subsequent meeting. Nick Kirkeles seconded. Unanimously approved.
6. Ecclesiastical Report: Father Dokos gave us a handout on St. Marina whose feast day it was today. He then talked about visiting the Serbian Orthodox Church in Punta Cana on his recent family vacation. The Serbian bishop of Chicago was present for the liturgy that day and 3 gold crosses were blessed outside the church and then hoisted up on the domes.
7. Ministries
  - a. Finance: Steve Milak
    - i. Review – as of 6/3/24 there is \$1,399,623 in the Operating and Capital accounts.
    - ii. Budget Meeting Dates – looking at having a budget meeting on 9/5/24 at 7:00 pm. Hopefully approving the budget on 9/19 at the next PC meeting.
  - b. Stewardship & Welcoming: Sandy Pihos

| Stewardship Report |               |               |          |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| Metric             | June 2023 TYD | June 2024 YTD | % Change |
| Number of Pledges  | 578           | 593           | 3%       |
| Total Pledged      | \$743,664     | \$756,356     | 2%       |
| Amount Collected   | \$601,724     | \$636,455     | 6%       |
| Median Pledge      | \$700         | \$600         | -14%     |
| Average Pledge     | \$1,287       | \$1,275       | -1%      |

- c. Building & Grounds: Norm Pomrening
      - i. Landscape Project Update – about done except for a few punch list items.

- ii. Question about leaks – they are brick related issues and will be addressed when the brick is repaired.
- d. Technology: Steve Milak - no update – overhaul of security system with camera feeds going into the church.
- e. Ushering: Norm Pomrening
  - i. Coverage for Vacancy needed in the upcoming months. Please let George know if you are available to cover.
- f. Greek School: Lena Theotikos turned in the Greek School teacher contracts which Norm will forward on to Vanessa Clohessy for review. Lena mentioned that Gigi may not be back in the fall because she may be moving to Greece,
- g. Missions: Peter Bell – the Hoppes will be returning to Albania at the end of the month. Nathan will be giving the homily on Sunday.

#### 8. Old Business:

- a. Golf Outing Review: Jim Maragos reported that the golf outing was very successful and that we made a profit of about \$20,000.
- b. Foundation Update: Jim Maragos reported that the approval from the Archdiocese included the following make-up of the Foundation Board of Directors – the parish priest, the PC president, the PC treasurer, 4 directors from HA and 2 directors from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago. The Foundation Committee will be meeting on August 8 to move forward and set up a committee to choose directors. They will advertise for volunteers in September and October and also look to have people begin donating to the Foundation.
- c. Altar Boy Robes: Father Georgiou –waiting for the approval of the design from the Metropolis. We are ordering 20 robes for around \$10,000 plus shipping and customs. Sandy Pihos moved to spend up to \$12,000 for the purple altar boy robes. Lena Theotikos seconded. Unanimously approved.
- d. Anniversary Luncheon: Sandy Pihos reported that everything is falling into place. Theme to be – *Building on our Foundation*. Working on prices for certain expenditures. Sponsorships will not be in an ad book. Format is still in the works.
- e. Picnic Update: Norm Pomrening reported that as of today there are 175 registered. Email blast on Monday and in the Weekly News. Set up is on Saturday. Please come and help if you're available.
- f. Cemetery Plots: Patty Pappas reported that Chapel Hill has given us an ultimatum to sign everything by 7/31. They want a complicated exchange with no explanation. Joan Berg is now handling the situation.

#### 9. New Business:

- a. Parish Assembly Date – 10/6: Norm Pomrening
- b. Parish Council Elections: Norm Pomrening
  - i. Date – the UPR dictates the election window. Best date appears to be 12/8.

- ii. Candidates – Norm asked who was not planning to run again. He asked that we start looking at candidates for the PC.
- c. Clergy Laity Recap: Patty Pappas & Norm Pomrening
- d. **Clergy Laity Recap**
  - i. **Theme: In Christ we are One.** This theme emphasized the importance of each person coming together in our faith to embody the fullness of Christ. It is an affirmation of our unity as Orthodox Christians.
  - ii. **Major Takeaways:**
  - iii. There was a great spirit of love and collaboration amongst the clergy and brothers and sisters of our faith. We have many faithful servants willing to contribute their time, talent and treasure. Our Church is vibrant and healthy, spiritually and also financially. However, there is room for growth and improvement.
- e. **SPECIFIC TOPICS/SESSIONS:**
  - i. **Financial:** The Archdiocese has been working to bring transparency to the financials of the church and to reduce the debts of the church. In the last four years, the audits of the Church finances have indicated continued and consistent financial health, resulting in no auditor comments for improvements in each of the last four years. Over the past six years (2018-2023), the Archdiocese has balanced its budgets with revenues exceeding expenses.  
There was a motion for a proposed 5.9% increase in parish Total Commitment for 2025 and a 3.0% increase for 2026. The main reasons cited for this proposed increase in Total Commitment was the need to increase the wages of Archdiocesan employees due to inflation; property and liability insurance increases; and anticipated increased legal costs. This was met with a significant objection from both clergy and lay delegates. As a result, there was an emergency meeting held by the Archdiocesan Executive Committee and an amendment was made to reduce the increase in Total Commitment to 2.8% in each of 2025 and 2026. This motion was passed by the Clergy Laity.
  - ii. The Pension Benefits Funding motion also passed, increasing the allocation for pension benefits funding by 2.3% in each of 2025 and 2026.
  - iii. **Women's Role in the Church** - The Body of Christ is not whole without women. Females are leaving the church at a rate that is significantly greater than men. They do not see female leaders and role models in the church at the higher levels and because of that there is disenfranchisement. There was discussion to take small steps toward bringing more female leadership within the church. One area in specific would be to allow female diaconates. Discussion that canon law does not prohibit it, but rather it used to be in practice but fell out of practice. At the divine liturgy service of the Clergy Laity, there were both males and females serving in the altar area.
  - iv. **Youth in the Church** - There is a great focus on maintaining vibrant youth and family ministries. The YAL conference overlapped with the Clergy Laity

and the youth were included in the final day of workshops. Fostering the love of church also feeds our Holy Cross Hellenic College with the next generation of church leaders. We need strong leadership within the church to guide our youth, which is the focus of the next topic.

- v. **Leadership within the Church** - There were many recommendations for both improving leadership and recruiting more leadership within the church.  
**Improvement:** There should be leadership education. Set aside two PC meetings per year to bring in experts to discuss special topics, such as financial maintenance of NFP organizations or stewardship matters.  
**Recruitment:** Upon election of a PC member, they should submit 2 names of potential replacement members. Those individuals can be recruited to serve on special committees or projects.
- vi. **Parish Planned Giving** - There was an official launch of a planned giving initiative. The Archdiocese is offering many resources to assist churches in formation of an endowment fund. The services they are offering include expert advice, formation assistance and marketing materials. They provided a poster, brochures and online resources to assist churches in this initiative.
- vii. **Religious Education** - This department is in charge of the St. John Oratorical Festival, the online web store called Orthodox Marketplace, and the publishing arm of the Archdiocese. They are working hard to prepare and publish resources and materials for every age group.
- viii. **Outreach and Evangelism** - There was much discussion of how some churches are very focused upon bringing new members into the church, and building a sense of community inclusive to all people. This growth model should be applied to all of our churches. To increase stewardship you need to grow every year by 15%. This is because each year you lose approximately 10% of your stewardship. This workshop provided direction on best practices to ensure growth of your church.
- ix. **All of these sessions were recorded and can be accessed online through the goarch.org website.**
- x. Norm provided information from Church Answers, a company that studies trends in churches all across the U.S. According to Church Answers in 2000 – the average church had 137 members; in 2020 – it had fallen to 65 members and in 2024 – it had fallen to 55 members. HA should be at 380 stewards based on those numbers. However, we are at 677 stewards. We're not doing great but better than most. Research shows the drop has plateaued – People are out looking for a spiritual home.

10. Review of Actions Taken in this Meeting: Norm Pomrening

11. Nick Kirkeles moved that we acknowledge all that Barbara Pappas did for our church. Bill Leider seconded. Flowers will be sent and other acknowledgements will occur by email, in the Mosaic, a plaque at HARC, etc. Unanimously approved.

12. Next Meeting: 8/8

13. Key Dates:

- a. Picnic – 7/28

14. Closing Prayer: Father Georgiou

15. Adjourn: Norm Pomrening at 8:45 pm

### **NOT TO BE PUBLISHED**

**Executive Session:** Norm Pomrening called it to order at 8:45 pm

- a. Digital Security-Department of Homeland Security presented at the Clergy-Laity. Ever since the disagreements between the Patriarch of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople Russian state hackers have been targeting the Archdiocese, the Metropolises, and at least 3 churches. In some instances they are extremely sophisticated. These are documented attacks. It's an area of concern and we need to address our digital security.
- b. Youth Protection-this is a sensitive issue. – if we do not have 100% compliance, PC officers and members can be liable if any abuse occurs. We must list out what Lou need to check on compliance.
- c. Question arose on Andrew Kraulos' resignation. Norm explained.
- d. Parishioner Proposal-Pauline Franks asked that a sign be placed above the door of HARC indicating it as "Barbara's Bookstore" in honor of Barbara Pappas. Discussion took place as to how we do not name things for people at HA. A discussion followed that a plaque similar to that of Fr. Bill's in the garden be created and placed near the entrance to HARC talking about Barbara's extensive service to HA. This will be explored.